

VISIT ROWAN COUNTY

SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

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ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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Name: Destination Marketing Committee

Date of Meeting: February 7, 2019

Committee Chair: To Be Appointed

Date of Next Meeting: March 7, 2019

Committee Members Attending: Kelly Alexander, Gretchen Witt, Michelle Patterson, Vivian Hopkins

Not Attending: Aaron Kepley, Darrell Blackwelder, Annette Privette Keller, Amie Baudoin, Krista Osterweil

Tourism Staff: James Meacham, Tara Furr, Sarah Michalec

Tara Furr called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the Destination Marketing Committee Meeting for February 2019.

Meeting Minutes:

Furr called for a motion to approve the January 2019 minutes as presented.

Motion: Gretchen Witt made a motion to approve the minutes.
Second: Kelly Alexander
Motion: Approved

Destination Marketing Report – 2018 Year End Report

Furr presented the 2018 Destination Marketing Year End Report. 2018 was an exciting year with more than 17 tourism-related events and groups that generated \$11 million in economic impact and approximately 2,700 overnight stays. Various overnight incentive packages were offered to provide opportunities for visitors to have an original experience in Rowan County.

The Rowan Arts & Ag initiative was born as a result of research completed through the rebranding process. The initiative was successful and will continue for a second year.

Tourism supported investments in 2018 resulted in 2,152 room nights and \$10,642,225 related economic impact.

There were 913 total packages booked in 2018. The packages included Wine About Winter, Day Out with Thomas, Polar Express and Earth Day Jam.

Sarah Michalec shared the digital portion of the 2018-year end report with the group, stating that there was a great increase in traffic on the website over last year. Nearly 65% of visitors are on mobile devices. The email newsletter continues to see growth in subscribers. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram saw double digit growth in followers in 2018, and content was displayed more than 2 million times. Social media continues to be one of the most cost-effective digital marketing tools.

Furr shared that public relations had 13 assists and 19 placements in 2018. A new coordinator position will be added soon, which will help with Visitor Services and Group Sales. This will allow more time to be devoted to PR. In 2018 there were 6 large group sales events that generated 753 room nights. The Historic Salisbury Trolleys did well in 2018 with 8,530 in ridership, \$29,779 in revenue, 37 rentals, 15 groups, 185 room nights and 45 advanced bookings. Visitors Services also fulfilled 399 traditional inquiries, and the destination kiosk program continued through 2018.

Destination Marketing Report – January 2019

Furr shared that the trolleys are already off to a great start with ridership at 20, revenue at \$400, rentals at 1 and advanced bookings at 1. The new coordinator position should bring additional growth with the trolley program.

Visitors Services fulfilled 17 traditional inquires in the month of January. An overnight stay package was done for Wine About Winter. Visitors received two free tickets to the event for their overnight stay in a Rowan County lodging property. There were 21 packages and 23 room nights booked for this event. This is the largest ever response for this particular event. There were issues with visitors attempting to scam the system for free tickets, this is typically associated with larger event packages. These issues became apparent during delivery and were able to be corrected.

Future business is off to a great start for 2019. The North Carolina Fine Arts Conference will be in February, North Carolina Main Street Conference will be held in March, Little League has been secured for July and Cycle NC will be making their overnight stop at the Transportation

Museum in September. Plans are already being made for the potential of the Railroad Passenger Car Alliance group in January 2021. Tourism Supported Investments include the upcoming Fine Arts Conference, as well as the Wine About Winter Package.

For January there were 2 media assists and 1 media placement for PR. The Salisbury Post Community Calendar partnership continues with 4,025 view in January.

Sarah Michalec shared the digital report with the group, stating there has been a continued increase in traffic on the website which is great for a slower time of year following the holidays.

There was a continued growth and reach on social media. On Facebook there was great success with sharing articles from reputable publications about destinations within Rowan County. Twitter saw continued success with photos. Instagram is generating a lot of interaction through stories and sharing local photographer's photos. The blog continues to do well. The top blog post for January was 10 Things to Explore in 2019 in Rowan County.

Arts & Ag 2019

Furr stated all the dates are being finalized for Arts & Ag 2019. All Art & Ag events will be promoted and marketed. The main events at the larger locations, including the NC Transportation Museum, Patterson Farm, and Kannapolis, will be heavily marketed and utilize extra funding.

James Meacham shared that the Arts & Ag web presence will begin in March. The schedule will include Tractors & Trains Festival at the North Carolina Transportation Museum, the Farm to Table Dinner at Patterson Farms, the Rowan County Farm Tour, China Grover Farmers Day, Choo & Brew, Harvest Winery Tours, Autumn Jubilee, Theater at the Farm and the Kaleidoscope Festival. The Kaleidoscope Festival has been moved to October for this year due to weather. Furr shared that a print brochure will be created for this year's events. New t-shirts will also be created in a different color for this year.

Meacham explained that the he webpage for event promotion will be on the VisitSalisburyNC.com site this year, due to traffic and marketing capabilities. Furr added that in previous years all sign ups and registrations were filtered through the TDA, by the request of the partners, this year everything will go directly to those associated with each individual event.

Adjourn

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Sarah Michalec, RCCVB